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By TED LEWIS

Washington, Aug. 29.—The Berlin experts operating under President Kennedy at least are in general agreement on one aspect of the cold war crisis. They feel that Nikita Khrushchev has still to be convinced that we, and our Allies will go to war over Berlin.

This amounts to an admission that the President has failed to achieve any tangible success in the first stages of his "crisis program." Six weeks ago the Administration made it clear, in advance of the President's July 26 defense buildup speech to the nation, that his program had one basic aim—to convince Khrushchev that we mean business.

At that time, it was agreed that this effort to get through to Khrushchev would take time. It was hoped he would first become doubtful that his estimates were correct. Then, as we applied more leverage, the experts thought he would, at some point decide that we meant business after all.

The feeling, however, is now percolating through the Administration that we must start all over again to convince Khrushchev that we are prepared to fight either a conventional war or a nuclear war if necessary. This is because of what happened in East Berlin Aug. 18.

As one adviser put it: "Our timetable was wrecked when East Berlin was sealed off by barbed wire and we failed to act. Before that, Khrushchev might well have begun to be unsure about our readiness to fight. Now the job of trying to convince him is going to be far more difficult."

This capital is always flooded with second guessers, some of whom are still moaning over Kennedy's failure to order the East Berlin barricades pulled down by his troops. This was the advice of former Secretary of State Dean Rusk, among others.

These hindsight Berlin "experts" have raised an interesting question when they suggest that the "chain of command" in dealing with the Berlin problem is so unwieldy that a quick Presidential decision for action in an unexpected crisis—such as the Berlin barricades—is impossible.

Lots of Expert Get Pres' Ear

The Berlin crisis setup is worth taking a look at, because it is baffling to the average citizen and suggests that even the President could get a little confused by the assorted advice he receives. But Kennedy, who is a smart operator, considers it efficient and productive of the kind of information he wants.

It would take considerable time to give a clear picture of individual and "task force" operations, but, in brief, this is the layout:

Supposedly "totally responsible" for the handling of the Berlin crisis on a broad scale is a task force headed by assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Foy Kohler. In this group, mainly State Department personnel, are E. (Chip) Bohlen, the department's Russian expert, and a representative of the Defense Department. Working with it at the same level are the British and West German ambassadors.



Foy D. Kohler
Heads crisis task force